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May 7, 2008

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"Lack of affordable housing is often a precursor to other problems in our communities like unemployment, poverty, and crime," said Rep. Melancon. "In Congress, I have supported affordable housing grant programs because reducing poverty benefits everyone in a community. This grant will create more affordable housing for needy members of the Chitimacha Tribe in south Louisiana, and I am pleased to announce it."

The Chitimacha Tribe has been awarded a \$120,211 Indian Housing Block Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that can be used for a variety of affordable housing activities. These activities include new construction of housing; acquisition, modernization or rehabilitation of rental or owner-occupied affordable housing; housing services; and housing management for low-income housing. The funds can also be put toward management of the affordable housing program or be invested in crime prevention programs.

Indian Housing Block Grants are authorized under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA) of 1996. The purpose of NAHASDA is to give aid to Native American tribes to address their affordable housing needs while allowing the individual tribes to make independent decisions regarding the use of these grants. Rep. Melancon voted to reauthorize that law in September of 2007, continuing the successful housing assistance program that benefits not only the Chitimacha Tribe but other federally recognized tribes throughout the country as well. The Indian Housing Block Grants, like the one announced today, give Native American tribes the funds and flexibility to build the affordable housing they need without infringing on their right to self-governance.

"Indian Housing Block Grants give tribes across the country like the Chitimacha the means to build safe and affordable housing, creating better lives for their people," Rep. Melancon said. "Further, this grant program respects the sovereignty of Indian nations and permits the tribes to decide for themselves how best to use the funds, depending on their needs. That respect for self-determination is crucial to the survival of Native American culture in this country."

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